

# Repository of Knowledge,

HISTORICAL, LITERARY, MISCELLANEOUS,  
AND THEOLOGICAL.

Vol. I.]

JANUARY 24, 1802.

[No. I.

TO BE CONTINUED EVERY MONTH.

## CONDITIONS.

- I. Each number will consist of sixty-four large octavo pages, on a fine paper and good type.
- II. Subscribers for the first number will be understood to continue for one year; at the expiration of which they may either continue or discontinue.

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The **T**HIS Magazine will consist of four Departments.

I. Will exhibit a concise view of the origin and progress of revealed religion, the state and circumstances of the church and of the world, and the most remarkable events which have happened in the former and the latter, from the commencement of time to the period in which we live.

II. Will contain a demonstration of the being and perfections of God, from a brief survey of the heavens and the earth; including a sketch of the most useful sciences; particularly astronomy, geography, natural history, moral philosophy, natural philosophy, chronology, &c.

III. Will consist of miscellaneous communications, biography; anecdotes; antiquities; criticisms; remarkable occurrences in the natural, political, moral, and religious world; intelligence concerning the state of the churches at home and abroad; occasional reviews of new publications; missions for propagating the gospel among the Heathen; new discoveries and improvements in the arts and sciences, &c.

IV. Will comprise a series of lectures on the various doctrines and duties of the Christian religion; intended to explain, and to confirm them against the objections of Jews, Deists, and other adversaries; forming a system of doctrinal and practical divinity, interspersed with occasional historical accounts of the most material controversies in religion, and in philosophy as connected with religion, which have been agitated in earlier and later times.



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THE  
REPOSITORY OF KNOWLEDGE,

HISTORICAL, LITERARY, MISCELLANEOUS,  
AND THEOLOGICAL.

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HISTORY.

*A compendious history of the origin and progress of revealed religion, the state and circumstances of the Church and of the world, and the most important revolutions which have occurred in the former and the latter, from the earliest ages to the present times; comprehending a period of five thousand and eight hundred years.*

THE Advantages of history, civil and sacred, are sufficiently obvious and universally acknowledged. It brings into our view transactions and events, which were accomplished long before we had a being, and of which, otherwise, we must have remained ignorant. To review the conduct of Providence, especially as it is employed about the Church on earth, in earlier and later times, is an employ, at once, instructive and entertaining.

The term, in the Greek New Testament, which we translate Church, has been used to denote any public assembly, lawful, or unlawful, convened for a good purpose or a bad. Waving a variety of definitions and distinctions, which have been used by writers on this subject, by Church I understand that part of mankind, whether great or small, that, in every age of the world, under both the Old Testament and the New, professes faith in the Saviour, and

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subjection to his government and laws. The erection of the Church, from this definition it is apparent, must have been subsequent to the fall, and the first promulgation of the gospel to our fallen parents in Eden. From this original discovery of the Saviour to the first man, in his lapsed state, to our own times, I hope, I shall be able to trace a Church, greater or smaller, more or less visible, in one part of our world or another. That our original ancestors embraced the revelation of the Saviour, and began, immediately after, to worship God in a manner unknown to them in their primeval state, to worship him through the intervention of a Mediator, I shall in the sequel have occasion to shew.

But, before I enter on this part of my undertaking, I shall, in an introductory manner, review that part of the Mosaic history, that relates the important transactions, which preceded the fall of man, and the revelation of the Saviour. This is comprised in the first two chapters of Genesis.

Here the following important particulars present themselves to our view: *The creation of the heavens and the earth; the formation of the first human pair; the institution of the sabbath; the terrestrial paradise; the federal transaction between God and man; and the origin of marriage.*

Concerning the origin of the world, various, discordant, contradictory theories have been published. The opinion of the eternity of the world, which has been held by Pagan philosophers, is equally repugnant to the sacred scriptures and the principles of sound philosophy. Of the great antiquity of the universe, the most extravagant and fabulous ideas have been entertained, by the Chinese, the Babylonians and the Egyptians. Concerning the early existence of it, several Christian writers have formed a variety of speculations. But, as has been observed, were we, for a moment, to set revelation aside, we might, on rational principles, with a high degree of pro-



bability, though not with infallible certainty, infer the short duration of the world. For this we might plead the general tradition of the most ancient nations; the concurring testimony of the earliest philosophers and poets; the total deficiency of all history preceding the Mosaic; the manifold and palpable absurdities and contradictions of those few accounts, which pretend to greater antiquity; the number of the inhabitants of the earth; the continued discoveries of new countries; the late invention of many useful arts and sciences, &c. But, without revelation, all speculation concerning the origin of the world is conjecture, uncertainty, fable, perplexity. The books of Moses are confessedly the most ancient in the world.

➤ In these and the subsequent sacred writings alone, is an authentic, consistent, satisfactory account of the origin of all things to be found. Concerning the original production of the heavens and the earth, as well as the economy of providence and grace, the scripture gives us sufficient information. That God, at the time and in the manner, related by Moses, created the heavens and the earth, ever has been an article of the creed of both Jews and Christians. *Through faith, says an apostle, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.* ➤ Often has presumptuous man arraigned the Omnipotent at his bar. Why, it has been asked, was not creation accomplished ages before it commenced? If one asks, why it did not happen at an earlier period, I may, with equal reason ask, why it was not delayed till a later. But ever ought we to recollect, that the Omnipotent acts not according to the extent of his power, but according to the wise determinations of his sovereign and uncontrollable will. Among many other questions on this subject, it has been queried, at what season of the year the world was created; whether in spring or autumn. One thing is certain, the fruits of the earth were produced in a state of maturity. Nor is it unworthy of notice, that the

Jewish year commenced in autumn. I speak not of the sacred, but of the civil year of the Jews.

Concerning the extent, in which the Mosaic history of creation is to be interpreted, Christian writers are divided in their sentiments. One restricts it to the earth; another extends it to the solar system; and many understand it of all worlds, visible and invisible, known and unknown. Not only the heavenly bodies, it has been pretended, but the earth itself existed prior to the six days, to which that part of sacred history, we are now reviewing, refers; and was then reduced to that form in which we now behold it. Suffice it for me to say, we have no authentic, consistent, satisfactory information concerning the origin of things, but what we collect from the sacred volume; and concerning any world prior to the Mosaic creation, the scripture has said nothing. Of hypotheses, conjectures, speculations, there is no end. Under the appellation of the heavens and the earth the scripture seems to comprehend all worlds and creatures, Acts xvii. 24.

The chronology of the world, which our best writers have almost universally adopted, is that of the celebrated archbishop Usher; a man equally famous for learning and piety. This computation, conformably to the Hebrew text, fixes the creation four thousand and four years before the Christian æra.

The term *Creation*, seems to have, in general, two significations in the Mosaic history; a primary and a secondary. According to the former acceptation it denotes the production of *something* out of nothing. According to the latter it signifies the formation of creatures, of various species, out of *the common* mass of pre-existent matter. In both acceptations it is exemplified in the first of the two chapters before us. In the introductory words, *God Created the heavens and the earth*, it seems to denote the production of the whole materials of which the various creatures were afterwards formed; and, in the sub-



sequent part of the chapter, it denotes the various modifications, which the different parts of the mass underwent, in the formation of the numerous and diversified material beings, with which the upper and lower worlds were replenished.

These various kinds of creatures, inhabitants of the earth, of the water, and of the air, the Omnipotent, no doubt, could have produced in a moment. But, for wise and gracious purposes, he chose to form them, not in a moment, an hour, or a day, but in six days. Fanciful and groundless is the opinion, that by six days, the sacred historian intends six thousand years.

In the Mosaic account of creation, it has been observed, there is no mention of angels. But may they not be included in the *host of heaven*, in that brief recapitulation of the works of creation, *thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them*, Gen. ii. 1? That they were the first, or among the first, as they, doubtless, are the best of the works of the great Creator, is, in the highest degree, probable. Hence the scripture represents them as spectators of the subsequent part of the work. Thus the Almighty accosts Job, and, I may add, each of us: *Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding, who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner-stone thereof, when the morning-stars sang together, and all the angelical sons of God shouted for joy?* Job xxxviii. 4, 5, 6, 7.

I should now review the distinct account which the sacred historian has given us of the work of each of the six days in order. But the important doctrine of creation, in its commencement, progress and completion, I shall fully discuss in the systematical part of this work.

What a stupendous display of the infinite power of the Deity is creation ? With what facility does he accomplish it ! he has only to say, and it is done. It has been observed, that the word translated *said*, in the account of the production of light, is elsewhere translated *commanded*. With the Almighty, to say, is to command ; and to command is to accomplish.

His wisdom never was defeated, his power never was, never can be resisted, his goodness knows no boundaries. He speaks and he acts in a manner peculiar to himself, and to which no creature can *pretend*.

In how beautiful an order does the Omnipotent proceed in creation ! What a beautiful gradation in it ! In creation, it has been justly observed, there are no chasms ; all the parts of it are admirably connected to make up one universal whole ; there is one chain of beings from the lowest up to the highest, from an insect to an archangel. The scale of creation does not advance by leaps, but by gentle steps. One rises gradually above another ; dead matter, unorganized earth, minerals, vegetables, insects, reptiles, fishes, birds, beasts, man, angels. It is observed by the wisest of men, *that the end of a thing is better than the beginning thereof*. In all the works of the Deity, in the world and in the church, there is a visible gradation, a glorious progression from a less to a more perfect state. In the works of creation ; in the economy of providence in the world ; especially in the economy of grace in the church, is this observation illustriously exemplified. Having made a variety of species of inferior beings, and, in every respect, fitted the world for his reception and accommodation, God formed that superior being, who, as the vice-gerent of his great Creator, was to have dominion over all the inferior creatures in this lower world.

The creation of man, to every reader it must have occurred, is introduced with peculiar solemnity.



On this important occasion the almighty Creator speaks thus : *Let us make man in our likeness, after our image.* When light was to be produced, God only said, let there be light, and there was light. But when about to create man, he seems to hold a consultation. Was the Deity at a loss ? Was he undetermined whether, or in what manner, he should proceed ? No, from an earliest eternity the plan was formed, and he, who formed, with equal facility, executed it. Here is a plain intimation of the superiority of man to all the other creatures below. The phraseology here has been supposed to allude to the royal stile among men. But the practice of speaking in the plural number is of late invention among the potentates of the earth. On this occasion, some Jewish interpreters have imagined, the Deity consulted with certain beings of the angelical kind, whom he was pleased to employ as co-adjutors, or, at least, as instruments in the formation of man. But do not the scriptures every where represent creation as the special prerogative and peculiar work of Deity ; a work which he *alone* can perform ? The expression, used on this occasion, is, doubtless, intended to signify the concurrence and co-agency of all the sacred Three in the creation of man, as, under his maker, lord of this lower world, and of all the creatures in it. In the introductory account of creation, Gen. i. 1, it has been observed, the noun, that denotes the great agent in this work, is plural, and the verb, that expresses his agency in it, is singular. The Godhead is one and undivided ; the persons are three, and, though not divided, distinguished one from another.

Of man alone, to the exclusion of all other creatures on earth, it is affirmed, that he was formed in the likeness and after the image of his maker. By this image of God, certain interpreters have understood that idea in the divine mind, in conformity to which man was created. But, according to this hy-

pothesis, every creature on earth, as well as in heaven, the insect no less than the angel, may be affirmed to be in the image of God. In all his works, in the world and in the church, the Deity acts in exact conformity to a plan, which, before creation commenced, he ever had in his all-comprehending mind. The image of God, which was the distinguishing honour of human nature, in its primeval state, has been considered in a twofold view; as physical and as moral. Man is a being of the compound kind; partly material and partly immaterial. In his material part he has propensions and appetites similar to those of the beasts which perish. In his immaterial and immortal part he has powers and operations analogous to those of angels: and, which is a far higher consideration, he bears a resemblance to his almighty Maker, of which material beings are incapable. On this account God is denominated, *The father of spirits*. Heb. xii. 9. But the chief dignity of human nature, in its original state, consisted in its conformity to the moral perfections of the Deity. *God made man upright*. Eccl. vii. 29. Though this original rectitude was not so essential to man, but that he might be despoiled of it and still continue to be a man, it was concreated and coeval with him. He was, at once, a man, and an upright man. Of his almighty Maker, he also bore a faint resemblance in that universal authority, with which he was invested, and the consequent uncontrolled dominion which he exercised over the inferior creatures. That this, though not the principal feature, pertained to that image of God, after which man was formed, the sacred history plainly intimates; the great Creator having said, *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*, immediately adds, *and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, &c.* That this image of God extended to both the man and the woman, is manifest from the express words of the



sacred historian ; *God created man in his own image ; in the image of God created he him ; male and female created he them.* The extravagant things, which Jewish and Mahomedan writers have told us, of the gigantic size of the first man, and celestial beauty of the first woman, I pass as nugatory and trifling. That they were perfect, in both corporeal and mental accomplishments, to a degree of which it is difficult for us to form an adequate idea, must be admitted. Holy and, therefore, happy pair ! happy in the sweet intercourse they had with each other ; happier, incomparably happier still, in the ineffably sweeter intercourse they had with their common Creator and God.

The institution of the sabbath, the history of the primeval state relates in terms the most unequivocal and express. Thus it speaks, *and on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made ; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it ; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.* Gen. ii. 2, 3. From the manner in which our translation introduces the sanctification of the sabbath, superficial readers may suppose that creation was finished, not on the sixth but on the seventh day. Thus the history speaks, *on the seventh day God ended his work*—But the Hebrew phrase, it has been observed, ought to be translated thus ; *on the seventh day God had ended his work.* That creation was finished on the sixth day is manifest from the concluding words of the first chapter, in which the Almighty seems to make a solemn pause, and to review all his works ; and, upon a review of them, to pronounce them all *very good.* On the last and best day of the week God is said to rest. Was he weary ? No, *the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary.* Isa. xl. 28. He res-

ted ! How ? He ceased to produce any new species or kind of creatures. This day God is said to sanctify, or, as the plain import of the Hebrew text is, set apart from a common to a sacred use. Every day, indeed, is God's, the night also is his ; but this day he has, in a peculiar manner, appropriated to himself and his solemn service.

It has been pretended, that the institution of the sabbath is introduced into this part of sacred history by anticipation. According to this opinion, the sabbath was not instituted, and, therefore, not observed, in the church, till the promulgation of the law from Sinai, and the commencement of the Mosaic dispensation. Arbitrary interpretation, unsupported by any proper authority ! an interpretation which the scripture contradicts, rather than sanctions. If the sabbath was not a primeval institution ; if it was not to obtain in the world till two thousand five hundred years after the creation ; for what purpose, with what propriety, is it introduced into the history of creation and of the primeval state ? What ! a church, for no less than between two and three thousand years, without a sabbath ! It is impossible. Never has the church been, never shall she be without her sabbaths. Nay, to the church triumphant in heaven an everlasting *sabbatism remaineth*. Heb. iv. 9. But, not to substitute assertion in place of argument, probability in room of certainty ; in the history of the earliest ages, short and sparing as it is, we have hints sufficiently plain, of the observation of stated seasons ; particularly the seventh-day sabbath, as a season of solemn worship in the patriarchal church. Remarkable to this purpose is the Mosaic account of the time, at which Cain and Abel performed the most solemn parts of their worship. Of the important circumstance of the season, the most express mention is made. *In process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his*



*flock, and the fat thereof.* When, on what occasion did the two brothers perform this solemn service? It was in process of time; or, as the Hebrew text emphatically expresses it, *at the end of days*—At the end of what days? Doubtless the days of the week; on the last of those days of which the week consists; on that last and that best of the days of the week, which God, *from the beginning*, has blessed and sanctified; appropriating it to himself and his sacred service, as a returning weekly memorial of the great work of the creation of the world. It has, accordingly, been observed, that the septenary division of time, that is, the division of it into weeks, consisting of seven days, obtained all over the eastern world, from the earliest ages. This reckoning obtained, not only among the Jews, but among the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Arabians, the Persians, and even the Indians; and carries in it a manifest allusion to the number of days in which creation was accomplished; and the first weekly memorial of it was celebrated. Neither is it unworthy of observation here, that even the ancient Pagans held the seventh day of the week to be sacred. Numerous quotations to this effect have been made from their writings both by Jews and Christians. Both Hesiod and Homer expressly call the seventh, the *sacred day*. The Hebrews express seven by a word that signifies perfection. In seven days the creation of all things, and the institution and original observation of the sabbath, were perfected. I only add another consideration, which is level to every capacity, and seems to carry irresistible conviction along with it. In the history of the first descent of the manna in the wilderness, which, as is well known, happened before Moses was called up to the mount, consequently before the law, which enjoins among other moral duties, the celebration of the sabbath, was delivered; the observation of the sabbath is expressly mentioned, not as a new

institution, but as an ordinance with which the Israelites had been long and familiarly acquainted. Exod. xvi. 23.

Ever, indeed, ought we to walk with God. In all our undertakings and actions we ought ultimately to aim at the advancement of his glory. But human nature, and the circumstances of the present state are such, as require a due proportion of our time to be, in a special manner, set apart for the more solemn service of our creating and redeeming God.

Did the sabbath obtain before the fall? Was it the first of all the primeval institutions? Has it obtained under every past dispensation? Has the church ever had, shall she ever have her sabbath? Does an eternal sabbatism remain to the saints of the most high in the better world? Is the sabbath, in the estimation of all saints, the best as it, now, is the first of the days of the week? What shall we think, what shall we say of ourselves, and of our cotemporaries? Was the sabbath ever treated with greater neglect and indignity than in the time and place in which we live? It, certainly, never was. To the basest of purposes is it, by multitudes, prostituted. What a weariness is it to many? To how few is it a pleasure?

Of the happy spot, which was assigned to man for his primeval residence, the sacred history gives us a particular description. *And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison; that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second*



*river is Gibon ; the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel ; that is it that goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates. And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it, and to keep it. Gen. ii. 8—15.*

This place is usually called paradise, which, as is observed, is a name of Persic original, and signifies a delightful garden : the sacred history calls it Eden, which also denotes pleasure or delight. Concerning this once happy, but now deserted and unknown spot, numerous whimsical, ludicrous speculations have been formed. It has been pretended, that no local paradise ever existed ; that the Mosaic description is not to be understood as a history, but as an allegory. It has been also supposed, that, before the fall, the state of the whole earth was paradisaical. Very different, doubtless, was the state of the earth before sin entered, from what it is now. Hence, when the scripture foretels the final expulsion of sin from the world, and the total removal of the baneful effects of the curse, it describes that happy state which is to succeed, by terms manifestly borrowed from the Mosaic account of the primeval paradise. The river of the water of life, and the tree of life, which the apostle John introduces into his account of the celestial state, evidently allude to the description of the terrestrial paradise in the Mosaic history. But the history of Eden naturally suggests to us the idea of a particular spot. In what particular part of the earth this distinguished place was situated, is a point on which the curious part of mankind have been, and still are, divided in their opinions. For it they have explored both heaven and earth. It has been, in imagination, found in the highest heaven, in the moon, in the middle regions of the air ; in Asia, in Africa, in Europe, in America ; in an unknown region, in the place now occupied by the Caspian sea ; on the Ganges, on the

Danube ; in Chaldea, in Armenia, in Mesopotamia, in Persia, in Arabia, in Ethiopia, in Palestine, in Syria, in the place where Damascus and Tripoli now stand ; in Tartary, in the island of Ceylon in the East-Indies ; in Sweden, and even under the arctic pole !

But though no spot could be found on earth exactly corresponding to the Mosaic description, we need not wonder, far less call in question the authenticity of the sacred history. From inundations, earthquakes, and various other causes, which I need not now enumerate, the terrestrial globe must have undergone very great alterations in the ages which are past. The opinion concerning the local situation of this celebrated spot, which is adopted by the generality of our best modern writers, is, that it was situated on the stream, which is formed by the junction of the Euphrates and the Tigris. This great stream, below the spot on which the Almighty fixed for the primary residence of mankind, divides into two branches ; which, after running a number of miles, fall into the Persian gulf. Thus, if we attend to the channels, rather than the current of the rivers, we shall find the number mentioned in the Mosaic history ; the Euphrates on the West, and the Tigris or Hiddekel on the east, above the garden ; and the Pison on the west, and the Gihon on the east, below it. On or at least very near this honoured spot, the celebrated city of Babylon was afterwards built ; a city, which in regularity, extent, and beauty, never, perhaps, has been, nor ever will be equalled, in our world.

But why should we explore distant countries in search of a paradise, which now is no more ? It is a certain, a melancholy truth, that paradise has been lost ; and is not, in the present state of things, to be regained. Not to be regained did I say ! I retract ; paradise, if not the terrestrial, the celestial has been regained. The second Adam, the Lord from heaven, *restores what he took not away.* The first Adam, by



one criminal act, offended his Maker and ruined the whole human race. From the mediatorial undertaking and work of the second Adam, result the highest glory to God, and the highest happiness to man.

For the extension of the penal consequences of the criminal behaviour of the first man, to his numerous posterity, the federal transaction between his Almighty Maker and him will fully account. It has pleased God all along to transact with man in a federal manner. The federal transaction between God and man, of which the Mosaic history informs us, was suited to the nature and circumstances of the primeval state. That God did enter into a covenant with innocent Adam, as the federal head of his whole natural posterity, I shall have occasion, in the systematical department of this work, to prove. The justice, propriety, and benignity of this dispensation I shall attempt to evince. In the history of the primeval state we have a hint, and only a hint, of the covenant made with the first Adam, the violation of which occasioned the ruin of the whole human family. In the history of the fall we have only a hint, of that superior covenant, which, before all worlds, was made with the second Adam, by the fulfilment of which the redemption of the church of the first born, is effected. The revelation of both these important transactions is, in the subsequent scriptures, gradually amplified and completed.

The essential parts of a proper covenant are two; a conditional, to be performed by the one contracting party; and a promissory, to be accomplished by the other. The sanction or penalty of any covenant is adventitious and accidental; arising from the fallibility of the person with whom it is made. That all-glorious person, the second Adam, with whom the covenant of redemption was made, is infallible, and, therefore, the supposition of a penalty, in the event of his failure, is preposterous and absurd. The first Adam, with whom the covenant of works

was made, was, indeed, a perfect ; but still, he was a fallible man.

It is not at all unusual, in scripture, to put a part for the whole ; or to express one thing and leave another to be understood. In this original discovery of the covenant of works, two of its parts are mentioned ; the one an essential, the other the accidental part. Here we have a prohibition and a commination. The prohibition is, *of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it.* The commination follows, *for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.* The all-comprehending duty incumbent on man then, and incumbent on him still, is to perform all known duty, and avoid all known sin. One sin only is expressly mentiond ; others are not excluded ; but included. Abstinence from the fruit of the prohibited tree was chosen to be the grand criterion of man's obedience. No necessity, no excuse, could he plead for transgressing. Heaven had granted to him the richest profusion of all things necessary and conducive to his happiness in soul and body. He was, at once, allured and alarmed. In the fullest manner was he apprised of the happy consequences of obedience, and of the direful effects of disobedience. Had he universal authority and dominion over all things below ? It was, certainly, fit that he should be laid under one small restriction ; that he might ever be reminded, that he was a dependent being.

Has the new covenant visible seals annexed to each dispensation of it ? The old covenant may also be said to have had its seals. Thus many have interpreted the history of the two famous trees in Paradise, the one known by the name of the tree of life, the other affirmed to be the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Concerning these two trees many questions have been proposed, and various conjectures have been formed.

(To be continued.)

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## LITERATURE.

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*A demonstration of the Being and Perfections of God, from a brief survey of the Heavens and the Earth; including a general sketch of Astronomy, Geography, Natural History, Natural Philosophy, Moral Philosophy, &c.*

A VERY pious writer, well known in the religious world, has observed, that the most high God, in condescension to the weakness of our faculties, the brevity of our lives, and our many avocations, has comprised all the knowledge conducive to our real happiness, in four volumes; the bible, the book of creation, the book of Providence, and the book of the heart.

That path of life, which the greater part of Christians are appointed to tread, allows but little opportunity for philosophical researches; and the little leisure they enjoy, is more properly devoted to the study of the book of grace, than that of the book of nature. But a sketch of Christian Philosophy, calculated to elevate the mind to high and honourable thoughts of God, must, to Christians, even in the lowest circles of life, be acceptable and useful. It has been observed, that the lines of the book of creation, though in themselves beautiful and expressive, are not obvious to fallen man. The works of creation have been compared to a fair character in cypher, of which the bible is the key. They who know God in his word, can trace him, and his perfections and designs, in his works. It is observed by the in-

spired writer of the nineteenth psalm, *that the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work.* To this observation of the devout psalmist, agree the words of the apostle Paul, *the invisible things of God from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and God-head.* Nothing, says a sensible writer, can be more becoming man, than to investigate the works of Deity, with *this* design, that he may excite in himself those devout affections, and that supurlative respect, which are the very essence of that praise, which is his reasonable and religious service. Are we disposed to employ ourselves in the delightful duty of praise? The means and the motives are both at hand. His works present themselves to men of every clime and condition, to the savage and the sage, in a wonderful, an instructive, an entertaining variety. How admirable the plan, how inimitable the execution!

Under the denomination of the heavens and the earth, we comprehend all the known parts of creation. The science, which describes the appearances, the magnitudes, the distances, the motions, &c. of the heavenly bodies, we call astronomy; and that which describes the figure, the dimensions, the revolutions, the divisions, &c. of the earth, we call geography.

The history of the origin of the noble science of astronomy, and of its progress in early times, is involved in no small obscurity, and has occasioned a great variety of speculations and conjectures; the canvassing of which could not afford either much information or amusement. The antiquity, as well as the utility of it, the Deity has been understood to intimate, when concerning the heavenly luminaries, he spake thus; *Let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.* Adam, in his state of innocence, we are informed by the Jewish Rabbins, had an extensive knowledge of astronomy. The inhabi-



tants of the antediluvian world, particularly Seth and his posterity, Josephus tells us, were acquainted with this science. The longevity of the patriarchs afforded them singular advantages and opportunities for making astronomical observations. At the dispersion occasioned by the confusion of languages, at the building of the Tower of Babel, Noah, we are told, retired with the children, who were born to him after the flood, into the north-eastern parts of Asia, and introduced the knowledge of astronomy into those countries. In this manner writers account for the early cultivation of the sciences in China, Siam, Japan, the dominions of the great Mogul, and other parts of the east. In the western world, as well as the eastern, among the Americans, as well as the Asiatics, particularly the natives of Mexico, writers have found sufficient proofs of an acquaintance with astronomy. But, there are especially two countries, which, in ancient times, were distinguished and famed for the cultivation of this sublime science; Chaldea and Egypt. Both these countries, it has been observed, were exceedingly proper for making astronomical observations, on account of the purity and serenity of their air. The temple of Belus, which was of an extraordinary height, it is said, was used as an astronomical observatory; and the lofty pyramids of Egypt, whatever may have been the original design of them, might answer the same purpose. For a proof of the early study of astronomy among the Chaldeans, it has been observed, Alexander the Great, when he entered Babylon, found, upon inquiry, astronomical observations, some of which had been made about two thousand years before. This noble study, the patriarch Abraham, who was a native of Chaldea, is supposed to have, in an eminent manner, promoted. The knowledge collected from the traditional history of creation, the contemplation of the heavens and the earth, the experience of preceding generations, and the various gradual dis-

coveries of the attributes and purposes of the Deity, which had been, by the long-lived patriarchs, transmitted from age to age ; he, no doubt, was solicitous to diffuse among his contemporaries. In the contemplation and study of the works of creation and Providence, the devout part of mankind, of every age and country, have found equal profit and pleasure. Does it not seem to have been the constant practice of the patriarch Isaac, at every approach of night, and re-appearance of the heavenly luminaries, to retire to the field for contemplation ? *Isaac*, says the sacred historian, *went out to meditate in the field at the eventide*. Was it not a view of the starry heavens that suggested to the devout Jewish monarch, the following pious ejaculations ; *When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers ; the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, can I forbear to exclaim, Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him ; or the son of man, that thou visitest him ?* Celebrating the wonders of creation, the sweet psalmist of Israel elsewhere sings thus—*To him who alone doeth great wonders—to him that by wisdom made the heavens—to him that made great lights ; the sun to rule by day ; the moon and stars to rule by night.*

From Chaldea or Egypt, or perhaps both, the study of astronomy passed into Phenicia, and from Phenicia to Greece. The period, at which this science was first cultivated among the Greeks, cannot be ascertained. Intimations of it, however, occur in the writings of Hesiod and Homer, who flourished almost nine hundred years before the Christian era. It was greatly improved by Thales, the Milesian, whose reputation for astronomical knowledge was raised to the highest pitch, by foretelling an eclipse, the arrival of which was attended with memorable circumstances. Especially was the astronomy of the Greeks improved and enriched by the discoveries of Pythagoras. This celebrated astronomer and mathematician, is believed to have been born in the island of Samos, and to have flourished about five hundred years before Christ. In



search of knowledge, he, it is said, travelled into Egypt, then celebrated for the study of the sciences, where he became acquainted with geography, and the true solar system, and made himself master of the several branches of learning, for which that country was so famed among the nations of antiquity. Incited by an insatiable thirst for knowledge, he, we are told, afterwards visited Persia, Chaldea, and other parts of Asia, as far as India, where he conversed with the Gymnosophists, and, from them, acquired the knowledge of the philosophy and literature of the east. This great philosopher taught that the earth was of a spherical or round figure; that the moon reflected the rays of the sun; and that the comets are wandering stars, disappearing in the superior part of their orbits, and becoming visible only in the lower. He is said also to have exhibited the oblique course of the sun in the ecliptic; and to have first taught that the planet Venus is both the evening and the morning star. But rational and philosophical, as the theory of Pythagoras was, it was universally reprobated, and speedily consigned to a state of oblivion.

Concerning the structure of the universe, the ancients, in general, entertained the most erroneous ideas. The Ptolemaic system almost universally prevailed. That the earth is an extended plain, surrounded by the ocean; that the sun, when he sets, dips into the western ocean; and, when he rises, emerges from the eastern; that the sun, the moon, and the stars, are small luminous bodies, at no great distance from the earth, and created solely for the purpose of illuminating it, was, for many ages, and among many nations, a prevailing opinion. Though, how to ascertain on what foundation the earth rested, or how to account for the velocity with which the heavenly luminaries seemed to move round it, they knew not. For a long series of ages, Europe continued in ignorance of astronomy, as well as of the other sciences. The revival of astronomical studies, some have

dated from the times of the emperor Frederick, who, in the thirteenth century, caused the astronomical treatise of Ptolemy, to be translated into Latin. Is it not a strong intimation of the utility of philosophy, and its subservience to the advancement of religion, that the revival of the former, and the reformation of the latter, happened almost at one time? Important, indeed, is the superstructure, which our modern philosophers have raised upon that noble foundation, which the great Bacon, upwards of two hundred years ago, began to lay. The honour of restoring and establishing the true solar system, belongs, in a peculiar manner, to Copernicus, a native of Thorn, born in the year 1472. All the books written by philosophers and astronomers, which could be found, he collected and perused; and all the various hypotheses they had invented for the solution of the celestial phenomena, he examined. The result was a firm persuasion, that the only true system was the Pythagorean; which makes the sun to be the centre, and the earth to move, not only round the sun, but also round its own axis. After twenty years spent in contemplating the phenomena of the heavens, in making mathematical calculations, in examining the observations of the ancients, and in making new ones of his own, he fully established that system of the universe, which now goes by his name, and is universally received by scientific men of all nations. Greatly has the science of astronomy been improved by the invention and use of telescopes. This improvement is attributed to Galileo, a famous mathematician and astronomer, the son of a Florentine nobleman, born in the year 1564. Though it does not appear that he originally invented, he, doubtless, improved the invention of telescopes, and applied them to astronomical purposes. Especially has modern astronomy been improved, enriched, and confirmed by the discoveries and experiments of that prodigy of mathematical knowledge, the incomparable Sir Isaac Newton.



Modern discoveries, in the sublime science of astronomy, have opened prospects, which, at once, astonish and delight to a degree which words are unable to express. The most obvious distribution of those heavenly bodies, which we commonly call stars, is into two classes; permanent and planetary; fixed and wandering. The former are usually, by way of eminence, called stars; the latter planets. The stars, on account of their apparent unequal magnitudes, are divided into six classes; called stars of the first; stars of the second; stars of the third; stars of the fourth; stars of the fifth; and stars of the sixth magnitude. Of the stars some are visible to the naked eye; others are discovered only by the assistance of glasses, called telescopes. The latter have, on this account, been called telescopical stars. An ordinary telescope is said to discover, in several parts of the heavens, ten times as many stars as can be seen by the naked eye. The apparent unequal magnitudes of the stars, are, probably, owing to their unequal distances. To a person at the nearest star, our sun would, probably, appear no larger than that star does to us.

At such immense distances are the stars from us, that, it is supposed, a ball shot from a loaded cannon, and flying with undiminished velocity, would travel several hundred thousand years before it could reach the nearest of them. As several stars have become visible only of late years, it is apprehended, that there may be stars at such immense distances, that though they have been in the heavens, and emitting light for almost six thousand years, and light flies at the rate of ten millions of miles in a minute, their light has not yet reached our world. Agreeably to all this, it has been observed, that were an inhabitant of our earth to travel toward the cope of heaven, and to advance in his aerial journey an hundred and sixty millions of miles; even in that advanced situation, he could not perceive the smallest visible difference in the apparent magnitude of the stars. Nor is this a mere supposition;

it is a certain fact. At the time of the winter solstice, that is, about the twenty-first of December, we are upwards of an hundred and sixty millions of miles nearer to the northern parts of the sky, than we are at the time of the summer solstice, or about the twenty-first of June; and yet, with regard to the stars, situated in that quarter, we perceive neither change in their aspect, nor augmentation of their magnitude. The discoveries of modern philosophers have rendered it, in a high degree, probable, that creation consists of as many systems, or worlds, as there are fixed stars; and that each of the fixed stars is the centre of a particular system or world, imparting light and heat to that system and the several planetary bodies which compose it; as our sun does to the earth, and the other opaque bodies which compose our system, or world; and which, for this reason, is usually known by the name of the solar system. Here I cannot forbear to transcribe the truly emphatical words of the very pious, learned, and elegant Harvey. "Could we," says he, "soar beyond the moon, and pass through all the planetary choir; could we wing our way to the highest apparent star, and take our stand on one of those loftiest pinnacles of heaven; we would there see other skies expanded, another sun, other stars, and other, perhaps, nobler systems, established through the boundless dimensions of space. Even at the end of this vast tour, we would find ourselves advanced no farther than the suburbs of creation, and arrived only at the frontiers of the great Jehovah's kingdom."

That part of the vast universe to which we belong, and to which our knowledge is almost wholly confined, called the Pythagorean, the Copernican, the Newtonian, the solar system, consists of the sun, as its common centre, and a number of opaque bodies, called planets and comets, which, in certain orbits, perform their periodical revolutions around the sun. The several known parts of this system, I shall briefly survey.

*(To be continued.)*



## MISCELLANEOUS PIECES.

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### *Evidences in favour of Christianity.*

**T**HAT, in the Augustan age, there flourished, in Judea, an extraordinary person, called Jesus Christ, is a fact better authenticated and supported, than that there lived such men as Cyrus, Alexander, or Julius Cæsar. There are more historical monuments to attest his existence and character, and infinitely more numerous and incontestible vestiges in the present day, to prove that there was such a person as Christ, than that there lived in past ages, such potent monarchs or illustrious conquerors. Is it certain that Christianity now exists in the world? no less certain is it that Jesus Christ once lived in it.

Many of the public monuments, which the renowned heroes of antiquity left behind them, have long since perished. Their magnificent palaces, their temples, their mausoleums, their opulent cities, are no more. Few are the remaining visible traces of the battles they fought, the empires they established, the laws they enacted, and the universal devastation they once spread around them. The kingdoms they conquered have, by the universal instability of human condition, undergone many revolutions, have gained and lost their liberty, and experienced all those reverses to which terrestrial glory is subjected. The curious traveller explores large regions in search of standing records of the greatness of former princes; traverses immense countries, once the seat of science and liberty, now the abode of barbarism and slavery; once swarming with inhabitants, now a dreary, inhospitable solitude; he searches, but in vain, for ci-

ties and temples and palaces in the very situation where they once stood. Babylon is now fallen ! Persepolis and Ecbatana are no more ! Long have travellers disputed, without ascertaining, the site of ancient Nineveh, *that exceeding great city of three days journey*. Few are the remaining signatures, in Asia Minor or in Judea, of Alexander's victorious arms. Few are the standing memorials in Gaul or in Britain, to evince that there was such a person as Julius Cæsar, who subdued the one, and invaded the other.

But that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, who lived, died and rose again, and founded a spiritual empire of religion, is an important fact, which the visible state of almost all Europe, and a considerable part of America, not to speak of other countries, sufficiently evinces. The customs and usages of every nation necessarily imply a cause and reason, to which they owe their existence, and suppose a date from which they commence. Religious institutions so extensively received, and religious solemnities so extensively celebrated, lead the inquiring mind through past ages to the period at which they began, to the person who established them, and the source from which they originally flow. Do we see numbers of great and populous kingdoms, however they differ in other things, agreed in baptising their offspring in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; in commemorating their divine Redeemer by the sacred memorials of bread and wine ; in appropriating the first day of the week stately to his solemn worship ? How shall we account for institutions so extensively received and practised ? Were they instituted in the present age ? Did they commence in the times of our immediate ancestors ? No, we can trace the sacred stream to its source. We can recur to times in which no such usages were known ; times in which the Christian institution had not commenced ; in which Judaism and Paganism overspread *the whole* inhabited world. Do the present state of the Jews, their tenets, their ceremonial observances,



their peculiar customs, their dispersion into *all the nations* of the world, yet remaining a distinct, separate body, through all the infinite changes and revolutions, that affect kingdoms and communities, furnish an incontestible proof, that there existed such a person as Moses, the famous Jewish lawgiver? And does not the evidence, that arises from the visible state of the Christian world, irrefragably prove, that there lived and died in Judea, that extraordinary person, whom we call Jesus Christ; who was born in the reign of Augustus Cæsar, and suffered under Pontius Pilate; and by whom Christianity was introduced, and established in the world?

*(To be continued occasionally.)*

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*The Propagation of the Gospel among the Heathen.*

I INTEND, in the subsequent numbers of this work, to review, occasionally, the several missions, which have been employed, by Christians of various denominations, for spreading the gospel among the nations of mankind, in both the eastern and western hemisphere. I shall now, for an introduction, lay before my readers the following hints relative to the subject.

The church, during the first ages of the world, seems to have subsisted in a sort of domestic state; confined to a few detached families. The ordinances of her worship were, probably, few, and the number of her members small. Neither does she seem to have had any stated governors or officers. The patriarchal heads of families, probably, officiated as her teachers and priests. This, in all probability, was the state of the church for about two thousand and five hundred years. When the Hebrew tribes left Egypt the church assumed a more public form, and, for about fifteen

hundred years, subsisted in a national capacity. Her ordinances and her officers, during this period, were exceedingly numerous. Still, however, she was almost totally confined to one nation, and within the boundaries of a country of very small extent. But, as the first fruits and certain pledges of an approaching conversion of the nations to the faith, and the service of the great Redeemer, individuals from among the neighbouring nations were, time after time, proselyted to the Jewish religion: and, it has been observed, that, in the ages which immediately preceded the introduction of the gospel state, converts, from among the Gentiles, were more numerous than in former times.

Even the personal ministry of the Messiah was chiefly confined to the Jews. Thus he speaks, *I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. When he first sent forth his apostles to preach, he delivered to them this charge, *go not in the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. Still, however, he gave repeated presages of the future spread of the gospel among the Gentiles. Gallilee, the inhabitants of which were a mixture of Jews and Gentiles, he favoured with a share of his personal ministry. With the Syro-Phenicians and the Greeks he had occasional intercourse. On his arrival in our world certain eastern sages embraced the earliest opportunity of doing homage to him. Now an ancient prediction received its initial accomplishment, *the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts*.

Having, by his obediential life and expiatory death, overthrown the partition-wall, which had, for a long series of ages, divided Jews and Gentiles, the glorious Redeemer, in the interval between his resurrection and ascension, renewed, and, in the most extensive manner, amplified the commission to his apostles. In terms the most universal and unlimited



does this second commission run ; *Go ye, says he, into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature*, that is, every human being, without distinction of country or condition. Among the Jews man was, by way of eminence, called *the creature*. With what fidelity and with what success the apostles executed this important and salutary commission, I shall, in the progress of this work, have occasion to shew.

Is it asked, Why was the knowledge of the Messiah, for between two and three thousand years, restricted to a few families ; and, for fifteen hundred years more, confined to one small nation ? Suffice it to say, that it seems to be the intention of the Deity, all whose designs are wise and good, to proceed, in all his works of creation, providence, and grace, in a gradual and progressive manner. Each succeeding dispensation has been superior to that which preceded it. The Mosaic economy excelled the patriarchal administration ; and the Christian institution, in extent and perspicuity, far excels the Jewish dispensation. The gospel state, in nature as well as in time, approaches nearer to the heavenly state, than any other dispensation with which the church on earth has been favoured. But even this last and best dispensation admits of a mysterious and glorious progression. Extensive was the spread of the gospel that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, and the final dispersion of the Jews. More extensive still is the spread of it in later times. The gospel has been preached and Christian Churches have been organized in countries, which, to the apostles and their cotemporaries, were totally unknown. And, in the ages which are to come, Christianity is to be propagated to an extent, that will incomparably surpass every thing we have seen, and even all the great and glorious things of which our godly forefathers have told us. For, as our Lord himself foretels, *this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations ; and then, and not till then, shall the end come* |

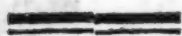
Matt. xxiv. 14. If we consult the places of the new testament, in which the expression, *the end*, occurs, we shall find, that it denotes, chiefly, two grand events; the one of which is already past, the other is not yet come. It refers immediately to the destruction of Jerusalem, the final dispersion of the Jews, and abolition of the Jewish polity, both civil and ecclesiastical. This dreadful catastrophe happened, agreeably to our Lord's prediction, about forty years after his ascension. Prior to this memorable event the gospel was propagated, and Christian churches organized, in various parts of Asia, Africa, and Europe. Converts, conformably to another prediction, were collected from India in *the east*, and Spain, or, perhaps, Britain in *the west*; from Scythia in *the north*, and Ethiopia in *the south*; and from the various intermediate countries. Such was the rapid progress, such the glorious success, which the gospel, notwithstanding the united opposition of Jews and Pagans, had in the first ages of Christianity.

The expression, *the end*, ultimately refers to an event, which, though long expected, has not yet arrived; that tremendous event, of which we are all to be spectators, and in which we are to be most intimately concerned, the end of the world, the general resurrection, and the last judgment. Prior to this final catastrophe the gospel is to be preached from the northern pole to the southern, and from the eastern to the western shore; or, as the prediction expresses it, *in all the inhabited world*, whether continent or island, *for a witness to all nations* of mankind. In the compendious account I am to give of the Christian church I shall have occasion to follow religion in its progress, in the past ages of the New Testament, through various countries of Asia and Africa, all, or almost all, Europe, and some part of America. What I principally intend here, is, to inform my readers, in a summary manner, of the missions, which Christians, of various denominations have em-



ployed for the truly laudable purpose of spreading the gospel among the heathen, in later times; especially since the commencement of the eighteenth century. To the friends of religion this subject is of the highest importance and concern. If we have an interest in the Saviour, we cannot, possibly, be totally unconcerned whether others have an interest in him or not. That truly generous spirit, which the apostle of the Gentiles breathes, must, in some degree, actuate us. He said, and each of us must be disposed to say, *my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel, and for mankind, is, that they may be saved.* At an early period did the vocation of the Gentiles begin to be foretold. From the times of Abraham, I might have said Noah, to the period in which we live, has it been, time after time, predicted. But, for reasons best known to the wise disposer of all things, it has hitherto been, in a great measure, delayed. Melancholy to all the friends of religion is the recollection, that the enlightened part of the world still bears but a small proportion to the unlightened part. Geographers have divided the world of mankind, comprehending about nine hundred and fifty millions of human beings, into thirty equal parts; and calculated, that of these, nineteen are Pagan idolaters; five Mahometans; and six Christians, of the eastern and western churches, Greeks, Catholics, and Protestants. A late writer computes the present inhabitants of the earth, at only eight hundred millions; of whom he supposes four hundred and eighty-one millions still in a state of Heathenism; one hundred and forty millions Mahometans; nine millions Jews; and only one hundred and seventy millions Christians. Of these ninety millions are Catholics; thirty millions Greeks and Armenians; and only fifty millions Protestants. Melancholy reflection! But, if the subject has a dark side, it also has a bright. What glorious prospects do the promises and prophecies, Jewish and Christian, open! Does not the present aspect of Providence encourage

us to entertain the pleasing hope, that the period is now at hand, in which the kingdoms of our world are to become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, in an extent unknown in all former ages of the earth?



*The Question, whether the Darknefs at our Saviour's Crucifixion was natural, or preternatural and miraculous, considered.*

**O**F this remarkable phenomenon three of the four evangelical historians take particular notice. *From the sixth hour there was darknefs over all the land unto the ninth hour.* Matt. xxvii. 45. *When the sixth hour was come, there was darknefs over the whole land until the ninth hour.* Mark xv. 33. *And it was about the sixth hour and there was darknefs over all the earth until the ninth hour.* Luke xxiii. 44. At an early period was the evangelical history published to the world. It is a plain, simple, artless relation of facts. Neither Jews nor Pagans, notwithstanding their united and unrelenting opposition to the Messiah's person, religion, and followers, presumed to contradict or even controvert it. In many of the incidents, which it relates, it is corroborated by various other writers. By the two famous Roman historians, Tacitus and Suetonius, we are informed, that, at the time of our Saviour's birth, there prevailed, not only over all Judea, but the other eastern countries, a general expectation, that a person was immediately to appear, who was to be governor of the world. That there lived in Judea, at the time to which the gospel history refers, such a person as Jesus of Nazareth, is universally admitted both by Jews and Pagans. The star that appeared at his birth, and the visit he received from the wise men of the east, are mentioned by Chalcidius the Platonist. The slaughter of the children of Bethlehem by Herod, and the centure past upon him, on that account, by Augustus the Emperor, are re-



lated by Macrobius. Many of the miracles which Jeſus performed, are acknowledged by thoſe moſt virulent and implacable enemies of Chriſtianity, Celfus and Julian ; as well as by the authors of the Jewish Talmud. That the power of the Pagan deities ceaſed at the coming of Chriſt, though he attributes this to their taking offence at the ſetting up of the Chriſtian religion, which he ignorantly charges with impiety and profaneneſs, is expreſsly allowed by Porphyry. The crucifixion of Jeſus under Pontius Pilate, Tacitus has recorded. The crucifixion, with the earthquake, and the concomitant darkneſs, are ſaid to have been admitted into the public Roman records; to which the firſt advocates for the Chriſtian cauſe appealed, and which their adverſaries did not pretend to deny.

The chief queſtion relative to the darkneſs, that attended the crucifixion of the Meſſiah, is, whether it was natural or miraculous. Certain perſons have imagined, that this darkneſs was occaſioned by a total natural eclipse of the ſun. If this was the caſe, there was nothing preternatural or extraordinary in it. But ſuch a ſuppoſition diſcovers groſs ignorance of aſtronomy, and particularly the nature of eclipses. To all who are, in any meaſure, inſtructed in the ſublime ſcience of aſtronomy, it is well known, that ſuch an eclipse of the ſun can happen only at the time of new moon ; and ſuch a darkneſs, occaſioned by it, cannot poſſibly continue longer than four, or, at moſt, five minutes. But the evangelical hiſtorians inform us, that the crucifixion happened at the time of the full moon ; and continued for no leſs than three hours, that is, according to the Jewish reckoning, from the ſixth to the ninth hour. The crucifixion happened at the time of celebrating the paſſover, and the celebration of the paſſover was invariably held, not at the time of the new, but at the time of the full moon ; when, according to the eſtabliſhed laws of the heavenly bodies, there could be no natural eclipse of the ſun. The Jews had a twofold year ; a

civil and a sacred. The latter commenced at their departure from Egypt; and was reckoned from one vernal equinox to another. This regulated all their religious festivals. They computed their months by the course of the moon; the first day of the moon, or, the first day on which she was visible, being the first day of the month. The month, called in the old testament Abib or Nisan, corresponding to the latter part of our March and the former part of our April, was the first month of their sacred year. On the tenth day of this month the paschal lamb was taken from the flock; on the evening of the fourteenth, when the moon was full, the lamb was slain, and the passover-feast celebrated. The law relative to this festival is most explicit, *Exod. xii.* Was the first of the moon to the Jews, the first day of the month? Was the celebration of the passover expressly confined to the fourteenth day of the month? Then ever must it have been kept at the time of the full moon; the time at which a natural eclipse of the sun never did, never can happen. Agreeably to what I have now said, Josephus, the celebrated Jewish historian, informs us, that the passover was statedly observed on the fourteenth day of the month Nisan, according to the moon, when the sun was in the sign Aries; and that the sun enters this sign at the time of the vernal equinox, is well known.

It has been observed, that in order that darkness occasioned by a natural eclipse of the sun may continue for three hours, the moon's motion in her orbit, and the earth's motion on her axis, must be, for three hours, totally suspended. It is added, that, in this case, if the power of gravitation be not suspended, the moon must fall a great way toward the earth. Thus the supposition that this extraordinary darkness was owing to a natural eclipse of the sun, is big with absurdity; and, instead of one, implies three miracles.

Upon the whole, is the order of the heavenly bodies such, that a natural eclipse of the sun can hap-



pen only at the time of new moon ; as an eclipse of the moon can happen only when she is full ? Did the darkness, that attended the crucifixion, happen at the time of full moon ? Then is it certain to a demonstration, that it could not possibly be natural.

Is it pretended, as the last subterfuge, that this darkness was occasioned by a comet passing between the sun and the earth ? The continuance of the darkness, for three hours, forbids such a supposition.

No wonder that the crucifixion of the Lord of glory was attended with circumstances extraordinary and unparalleled. Such another event never did, never will happen. Do any hesitate concerning the evil or the danger of sin ? Let them repair to Calvary, and view the son of God, suffering and satisfying for it ; suspended between the heavens and the earth ; as if unworthy of a place either in the former or the latter ; a spectacle to God, to angels, to devils, and to men ! No wonder though the sun refused to shine ; though the earth shook to her centre ; though the rocks rent, and the graves were opened !

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*A memorable Instance of the special kindness of Providence, to a pious Family reduced to very necessitous Circumstances.*

**T**HE inspired writer of one of those psalms, the subject of which is that all-superintending Providence, which, though it extends to every creature, is, in a peculiar manner, employed about the children of God in this world, speaks, from observation, thus, *I have been young and now am old ; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.* Psal. xxxvii. 25. Among numerous other instances, in which Providence has, in a signal manner, interposed in behalf of the Godly in perilous times, and trying circumstances, the following deserves to be transmitted to posterity.

The reverend David Anderson had been a minister at Walton, upon Thames, but, along with many other worthy ministers, was ejected by the infamous Bartholomew act, 1662.

This good man, soon after his ejection, crossed the seas, went into Zealand, and settled in Middleburgh, with his wife and five small children. Having no employment he soon consumed the little money he had carried over with him; owed a year's rent for his house, and was reduced to the want of the very necessaries of life. Yet such was his modesty, that he could not prevail with himself to make his case known in that strange land. In this condition, after he had been one morning at prayer with his family, his children asked some bread for their breakfast; but having neither bread, nor money to buy any, they all burst into tears. In this crisis of distress, the bell at the door rang; and Mrs. Anderson, in a mean habit, went to see who was there. The person that rung the bell, asked for the mistress. She answered, that her name was Anderson. Here, says he, a gentleman has sent you this paper; and will send you some provisions presently. When they had opened the paper, they found forty pieces of gold in it. The messenger, on delivering the paper, went away without telling his name, or whence he came. Soon after came a countryman with a load of flesh, fish, herbs, bread, and other necessary things. Neither did he tell whence he came; nor did they to their dying day know who sent him. However, the reverend John Quick, from whose memoirs this account is taken, being, in 1681, pastor of the English Church in Middleburgh, came, in an accidental manner, to the knowledge of the whole matter. For, as he was at the country house of Mij<sup>n</sup> Heer de Koning, a magistrate of that city, and happened to mention that story, M. de Koning told him that he was the person who carried the gold from Mij<sup>n</sup> Heer de Hofte, a pious merchant of that place, with whom he was then an apprentice. He added, that Mij<sup>n</sup>



Heer de Hofte, observing a grave English minister walk the streets frequently, with a dejected countenance, was secretly impelled by the good providence and spirit of God, to inquire into his circumstances, and, apprehending he was in want, sent him the gold by M. de Koning, and the provisions by his country servant, saying, God forbid, that any of Christ's ambassadors should be strangers, and we not visit them; or in distress, and we not relieve them. But he expressly charged both his servants not to discover his name. This providential relief, besides present provision, enabled good Mr. Anderson to pay his debts. This signal instance of the great goodness of God he could not forbear to communicate to his religious friends and acquaintance. This coming to the ears of M. de Hofte, he afterwards found a secret way of paying Mr. Anderson's rent for him yearly; and conveying to him, besides, ten pounds sterling every quarter, which he managed in such a manner, that Mr. Anderson never did or could know his benefactor. M. de Koning kept the whole matter secret, as long as his master lived, but thought himself at liberty to give this account after his death.

Upon the death of Mr. Spang, minister of the English church in Middleburgh, Mr. Anderson was unexpectedly chosen in his stead. When the messenger came from the church to acquaint him with it, his wife was so over-borne with joy, at the goodness of God, in providing for them a station of utility and honour, and a maintenance certain and adequate to their wants, that it threw her into a fever, of which she died. Mr. Anderson did not survive her long. The lords of the city became guardians to the five orphans he left behind him. The famous Anna Maria Shurman took one of his daughters, and two other Dutch gentlewomen the two others, and became mothers to them. M. de Hofte, took his two sons under his own charge, and, by his last will, bequeathed a good portion to each of his daughters. He order-

ed that the eldest son, who was very pious, should be brought up a scholar, and settled upon him sixty pounds sterling per annum, for his education at one of their universities. The youngest he appointed to be bound apprentice; and, when he should be out of his time, to receive sixty pounds sterling to begin the world with. Thus Providence not only provided, in an extraordinary and unexpected manner, for that good man and faithful minister of Jesus Christ; but continued its special favour to his children after him. *Who so are wise and will observe these things; even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.*

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*Anecdote of the celebrated Mr. Hervey.*

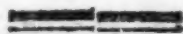
**T**HIS truly great man happened once to travel in company with a lady, who chose to introduce, as the topic of conversation, the advantages and the exquisite pleasure which, she said, theatrical entertainments, in prospect and recollection, as well as during the time of performance, afforded her. After she had for some time expatiated on the subject, with great fluency, the good man accosted her to this effect. Madam, you have enumerated many of the advantages and pleasures you receive from theatrical entertainments; but one material thing has escaped you. Pray sir, replied she, what is that? It is, madam, said he, the exquisite pleasure that your reflections on the theatre will afford you on a death-bed, and in your departing moments. This well-meant sarcasm, under the direction of Providence, and through the agency of the divine Spirit, had a most happy effect. It made an immediate and lasting impression on the lady's mind, and proved the blessed occasion and mean of her conversion to religion, and infinitely superior pleasures; to which, amidst all her gaieties, amusements, and joys, she had, till then, been an utter stranger. This interesting incident has been beau-



tifully versified in the following lines, which appeared in an early number of the Evangelical Magazine.

“ How great my pleasures at the play!  
A lady once was heard to say.  
Amusement surely all divine!  
Be such amusements always mine.  
First, there's the joy I always know,  
*Before* the hour arrives, to go;  
And when I'm there—but who can say  
What are my raptures at the play?  
Besides, the recollected joy  
*Next day* affords me sweet employ.”

“ That may be true,” a friend reply'd,  
“ But is there *not one* joy beside?  
You have not mentioned—tell me why,  
The joy of plays when call'd—to die!  
Perhaps a thunder bolt from heav'n  
Might then have less confusion giv'n.  
The gay young lady felt the smart,  
Conviction seiz'd her wounded heart!  
No more she boasts her former joys,  
Religion now her thoughts employs.  
False pleasures can no more amuse,  
Superior bliss she now pursues.  
“ O happy change!” she says, and tells you why,  
Religion's joys will last, when call'd—to die.”



*A brief Sketch of the Birth, Life, and Death of the  
Apostle Paul.*

**T**HIS eminent apostle, commonly called the apostle of the Gentiles, is, in the New Testament, known both by his Hebrew name Saul, and his Roman name Paul. He was by birth, as well as profession, a Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin, and of the sect of the pharisees. He was born in Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia, a country of Asia Minor. He had a sister, married at Jerusalem, whose son was of emi-

ment service to him, during his sufferings for religion in that city. Of a number of his kinsmen, who embraced the Christian religion, he makes express mention, in the conclusion of his epistle to the Romans. He, in early life, enjoyed singular advantages for the literary and religious culture and improvement of his mind. Tarsus, the place of his nativity, is said to have been, at that time, the most celebrated school in the world; and, for polite literature, to have equalled, if not surpassed, Athens and Alexandria. From Strabo, who lived in that age, the following account of it has been copied. "The inhabitants of this place cherish such a passion for philosophy, and all the various branches of polite literature, that they have greatly exceeded Athens and Alexandria, and every other place, in which there are schools and academies for philosophy and erudition. But Tarsus differs in this, that those who here devote themselves to the study of literature, are almost all natives of the country—there are not many from foreign parts who reside here. Nor do the natives of the country continue here for life, but they go abroad to finish their studies, and, when they have perfected themselves, they choose to live in other places: there are but few who return home." This observation of the historian is exemplified in the subsequent history of our apostle. After giving a list of several eminent men, who, as philosophers, orators, poets, professors of the belles lettres, flourished in this city, Strabo concludes his account in the following words. "But Rome can best witness the great number of learned men, the natives of this city; for it is full of learned men from Tarsus and Alexandria." In this city, so celebrated for philosophy and science, Paul went through a course of Greek learning, and acquired an acquaintance with its most elegant writers, whom we find him sometimes quoting. Having finished a course of liberal education in this city, he travelled abroad to perfect himself in the various branches of useful learning. His thirst for knowledge seems to have been



very great. He appears to have been a man of the finest talents; of quick apprehension, great vivacity, and of signal resolution. From Tarsus he removed to Jerusalem, to study under Gamaliel, an eminent Jewish doctor, under whose tuition he made an uncommon proficiency in the knowledge of the law, and the acquisition of Rabbinical literature. Here he imbibed the strongest prepossessions in favour of the Mosaic constitution, and the fullest conviction of its authority. His violent zeal for the religion of his ancestors instigated him to attempt, by every possible method, to crush the new-born cause of Christianity in its very infancy. Prompted by this violent precipitance, to which his veneration for the law transported him, he gave his ready suffrage for the death of the proto-martyr, Stephen, and kept the clothes of those who stripped themselves to embrace their hands in his blood. Thus blind, injudicious zeal hurried him on to the last extravagances against the Christians. The professors of that religion he pursued every where with the most implacable fury; forcibly entering private houses, and, with unfeeling rage, dragging persons of every age, and of every sex, to prison. His moral character, in other respects, was unexceptionable. For the sincerity and probity of his heart, he could appeal to God himself. He, as he himself afterwards informs us, acted ignorantly and in unbelief. Accordingly, in his mad and sanguinary career, he was not permitted to persist long. Concerning him, God had gracious designs, and the season of their accomplishment was at hand. Judea being too narrow to circumscribe his zeal for persecuting the Christians, he went to the high priest, and desired of him a commission to empower him to suppress the obnoxious cause in other parts. This bloody mandate he easily obtained. In pursuance of it he immediately set out for Damascus; breathing destruction to the whole Christian name. But, as he approached the city, he was suddenly and finally stopped in his mad and dangerous career. He receiv-

ed, in a manner truly unexpected and extraordinary, the fullest conviction, that the cause he laboured to exterminate, was the cause of God. Striking proof of the sovereignty, the riches, the resistless efficacy of saving grace! A most cruel, bloody persecutor, is immediately converted into a most zealous, successful preacher of Christianity. In this sacred cause he now embarked; and, with a spirit and ardour which nothing could extinguish, with an intrepidity and fortitude, which persecution and death, in all their horrid forms, never could move, he propagated it in the world; migrating from country to country, from city to city, night and day, in season and out of season, teaching and inculcating the religion of Jesus—passing through honour and dishonour, reputation and disreputation; slandered, abused, calumniated, scourged, imprisoned, stoned; yet accounting all those dreadful scenes as nothing for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ his Lord. Cheerfully did he suffer the loss of all his secular advantages, and worldly emoluments, and temporal honours. Important, indeed, and diversified, are the incidents of the life and ministry of this famous Apostle. What a series of extraordinary dangers, and no less extraordinary deliverances!

As Paul had appealed to Cæsar, it is probable, that he was soon after his arrival in the capital, brought before him. The indulgence he experienced in the city, where he was allowed to live in his own hired house, for two years, has been supposed to have been owing to the information which Julius, the captain of the guard, gave concerning the occurrences of the voyage; in which the Apostle had performed miraculous cures at Melita, and predicted both the loss of the ship, and the preservation of the passengers. Whither the Apostle went at the expiration of these two years, when he obtained his liberty, is not certainly known. Some have supposed, that he travelled into Spain, if not into Britain, preaching the gospel. Others have imagined it more probable, that he con-



tinued in Rome, the centre of the empire, into which there was a general concourse of people from all quarters; which rendered it the most eligible situation for propagating Christianity, and receiving intelligence concerning the state of the churches in the various quarters of the world. This illustrious champion for the Christian cause is supposed to have sealed his testimony with his blood, and received the crown of martyrdom in the cruel persecution, which was raised by the bloody Nero, on occasion of the burning of Rome; concerning which Suetonius and Tacitus have informed us. This persecution commenced in the year of our Lord 64. Concerning the occasion and ostensible reason of the burning of the city, historians are not fully agreed. Some suppose that Nero, that monster of men, in his wanton cruelty, set fire to the city, that he might enjoy the glory of rebuilding it, and calling it by his own name. But Suetonius, in his life of Nero, informs us, that when a certain person in conversation said, "for ought I care, when I am dead, the world may be set on fire;" the tyrant replied, "it shall be done while I am living." Immediately after he devised methods to carry his execrable purpose, so far as it related to Rome, into execution. This horrible conflagration continued for no less than six days and seven nights; consuming a great number of temples and other stately edifices, as well as the habitations of private citizens; many of whom perished in the flames. This awful scene, the bare recital of which shocks humanity, the monster beheld with pleasure, from a lofty turret; and, diverting himself, as he expressed it, with the beauty of the flame, dressed in the habit which he usually wore on the stage, sung a poem, called, *The Destruction of Troy*. Having perpetrated this villany he had the audacity to charge it on the Christians; that he might exercise his cruelties upon them, under the plausible pretext of Justice.

His ingenuity the tyrant racked to invent such a variety of exquisite tortures as were most congenial to his own savage disposition. Some were wrapped in the skins of wild beasts to be devoured by dogs; others

were daubed with inflammable matter, and, at the close of the day, set on fire like torches, to give light to passengers; while Nero himself, who drove about wantonly in his chariot, increased their misery by mockery and derision. As it is probable, that this persecution raged as far as the Roman authority itself extended, the number of victims must have been immense. But that almighty Saviour, who holds in his hands the reigns of universal government, caused the very fury of the persecutor to promote the interest of Christianity.—Amidst their dreadful sufferings, he enabled the Christians so to demonstrate the invincible energy of his religion, that they even gloried in their tribulations.

To the persecuted church accessions were, day after day, made. Even in the family of the cruel Nero Paul had seals of his ministry. He, we are told, was happily instrumental in the conversion of a favourite concubine; who, afterwards, declining the emperor's company, he formed, and speedily executed, the murderous purpose of putting the apostle to death. As this eminent martyr was led to the place of execution, two of his guard, we are informed, were converted; and suffered martyrdom a few days afterwards. He finished his triumphant course at a place called the Salvian waters; and was buried on the way of Ostium. Over his grave a magnificent church was afterwards built, which remains to this day.

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*Nature full of Life.*

THE waters teem, the dry land swarms, with sensitive existence. The subterraneous cells, the inmost recesses of the hard stone, all the productions of the orchard, the pure stream, the transparent air, are full of unseen inhabitants. Has the gracious Creator given to such minute beings, a capacity for animal gratifications? Has he, in his tender care for us, made them imperceptible to our senses? How astonishing his goodness! Were they perceptible to our senses we should abhor our sweetest drink; and in the dead of night, when all is silence, we would be stunned with noise!



## THEOLOGY.]

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*A Series of lectures on the various doctrines and duties of the christian religion, intended to explain, and to establish them against the objections of Jews, Deists, and other adversaries; forming a regular system of doctrinal and practical Divinity; interspersed with occasional historical accounts of the most material controversies in religion, and in philosophy as connected with religion, which have been agitated in earlier and later times.*

### LECTURE. I.

II. Tim. iii. 16. *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

**I**NTENDING to elucidate, in their natural order, the various parts of revealed religion, I begin with an account of those inspired books which are, at once, the reason and the rule of our faith and of our duty. This, manifestly, is a subject of great extent, importance and utility. In treating it I shall consider *the necessity, the extent, the perfection, the inspiration, the contents, the divisions, of the sacred scriptures, and the important salutary purposes they are intended and calculated to subserve.*

To pave the way for the illustration of these particulars I must suggest a few preliminary observations.

That great God, who alone could create man, and who alone can save him, in his now lapsed state, is entitled to appoint and reveal to him the way by which the important end of his creation and of his redemption may be accomplished. Not only are we, without revelation, ignorant of the only way in which we can, either glorify or enjoy God, in our now fallen state, but, Adam himself, great as his knowledge originally was, did not, at first, fully

know the extent of that obedience which he owed, on the performance of which the honour of his maker and his own happiness necessarily depended. If, we suppose an interval, as, I think, we must, however short it may have been, between his creation and the proposal of the covenant of works to him, as the federal head of his numerous posterity; he must have been, at first, ignorant of one special circumstance on which both his duty and his felicity principally depended.—From the commencement of his existence he was under the moral law, which is of universal and perpetual obligation. The difference between a law and a covenant, I shall, in the sequel, have occasion to explain. Of the superadded law, relative to the fruit of a particular tree, on which his standing or falling was chiefly to turn, he must originally have been totally ignorant. Was innocent Adam, for a time, ignorant of a particular instance, on which his duty and his happiness so essentially depended? Unacquainted must his whole posterity be with that *new way*, in which alone they can, in their now fallen state, glorify and enjoy God, till he, by the gospel, reveal it to them.

Again, if we had, along with the rule which Adam, in his first state, had to direct him how he was to glorify and enjoy God; that knowledge of it, and that ability to fulfil it, which he then had; all this would be utterly insufficient to direct us in what manner we may glorify and enjoy him in our now lapsed condition. But who of all the fallen posterity of Adam can, according to the tenor and terms of the covenant of works, either glorify or enjoy God? Even on supposition, that we could do all that innocent Adam did, nay, all that he was required to do, an insuperable obstacle would still lie in the way of our entering into eternal life. We now are sinners, and for our multiplied and aggravated offences satisfaction is demanded; and satisfaction adequate, at once, to the number and magnitude of our crimes, and to the dignity of that great Being whom we have offended. How shall this be effected? *Are thousands of*



rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil, sufficient? No. But may not human victims suffice? No. Even *the fruit of the body* is declared to be utterly inadequate to atone for *the sin of the soul*. But why do I talk either of our fulfilling the precept or satisfying the penalty of the law? Of its original propension and ability to good, human nature is now unhappily despoiled. The covenant of works was calculated for the meridian of the innocent state; not at all for the fallen. If ever, therefore, we in our now sinful state, either glorify or enjoy God, it must be in the way, and according to the tenor, of another and better covenant. This leads me to observe,

That, immediately after the fall, it was revealed to man, that he was both to glorify and enjoy God, in a way, with which till then he was, and without revelation, ever must have been, unacquainted. The eternal secret was disclosed. To the astonishment and the joy of men and angels, it was discovered, that previous to the violation of the covenant of works, and the consequent ruin of the human race; nay, prior to the production of the heavens and the earth, God had transacted with a person, in all respects superior to Adam, a better covenant, by the fulfilment of which the redemption of fallen man was to be effected. Even prior to their expulsion from the paradisaical spot, was this discovery of the astonishing expedient for the recovery of our lost world, granted to our fallen parents. At so early a period was the gospel preached in our world. It was expressly revealed, that, at a future period, *the seed of the woman was to bruise the head of the serpent*. The way of man's return to the terrestrial paradise was to be finally shut, but the way of admission into the celestial was opened. It is asked, Was the revelation granted to the first human pair, immediately after the fall, the same which we have in the sacred scriptures? The answer is obvious; the same, in substance, it, doubtless, was. For Adam, and for his numerous posterity, there is one Saviour, and one common salvation. There are, how-

ever, two obvious respects, in which the revelation of the Saviour and of his salvation, differs in earlier and later times.

In point of extent and perspicuity. The radical revelation, which our original progenitors received, was, during the patriarchal ages, and during the Mo-  
saic economy, in a gradual manner, amplified and enlarged. At last, by the personal ministry of our Lord, and his surviving apostles, it was completed, and the sacred canon closed. This was certified by a solemn declaration, that, as nothing is to be diminished from it, no addition is to be made to it.

This revelation was, for many years, verbal and traditionary; transmitted by the long-lived patriarchs from generation to generation. It was, however, in due time, committed to writing. It is a received opinion, that no part of the sacred volume was written till the times of Moses. That he wrote the pentateuch, or first five sacred books, and the ninetyeth psalm, we know; and it is the opinion of many, that he also wrote the book of Job. Now, according to our best chronologers, Moses was born about the year of the world 2433; and was commissioned to lead Israel out of Egypt about the year 2513. Thus did the world and the church subsist for no less than two thousand and five hundred years, before any one of the sacred books was written. The church, as well as the world, subsisted for upwards of four thousand years, before any one of the books of the New Testament was written.—How many and how great are *our* privileges and advantages! I add,

That, without revelation, man, now fallen, cannot answer the purposes either of his creation, or his redemption; he cannot acceptably glorify, or truly enjoy God. One of the many stratagems, which the enemy of God and religion has long used to discredit revelation, and defeat the salutary designs of it, is a specious, but absurd, pretext; that it is unnecessary. It is pretended, that what is called the light of nature, is sufficient to direct man to everlasting felicity.



city. But, if the light of nature be sufficient for one nation, or one man, must it not be sufficient for all? If it be sufficient for all, why is revelation granted to any? Does God any thing, in the world, or in the church, in vain? Let us appeal to facts. Concerning the situation of both the pagan world and the Christian, we have information sufficient, to enable us to form a comparative estimate. Are pagans and Christians, in fact, equally informed concerning their duty or their happiness? The extent and limits of natural religion it is exceedingly difficult to ascertain. Among the wisest pagan nations we find a mixture of the dictates of their own reason and the traditions of their ancestors; traditions as ancient as the times of Noah, from whose family all the inhabitants of the earth have sprung. That there is evil, both moral and penal, in the world, the unenlightened nations know. But ask them, either how evil entered into the world, or in what way it may be effectually expelled from the world, and you, at once, silence them. To this interesting, necessary question, unenlightened reason can furnish no answer. What silly, what cruel, what unavailing expedients have the unenlightened part of mankind used to appease the Deity, and extricate themselves from the miseries in which they have found themselves involved! Fallen man, indeed, retains some inbred notions of right and wrong. But with regard to the true knowledge of his duty, and the all-important concerns of the world to come, he is as stupid as he can be supposed to be, not to be altogether degraded from the rank of a rational, to that of an irrational animal. To the most stupid of animals; the ox, the ass, the wild ass, the wild ass's colt, is he compared. Job, xi. 12. To the animals, the insects is he sent for instruction. Prov. vi. 6—11. Of the immortality of the soul, and a future state, how doubtfully do the wisest of the pagan philosophers, Socrates himself not excepted, speak? That there is a God all nature proclaims. But of a Deity what low and unworthy, impure and base, ideas do

the unenlightened nations entertain? In what a situation are the inhabitants of the far greater part of Asia, Africa, and America? In what deplorable circumstances were the inhabitants of that small, but favoured, quarter of the world, Europe, previous to the publication of the gospel among them? All who are conversant in the history of mankind anticipate every thing I can say here. We find them, in their unchristianized state, acting in a manner, which it is a disgrace to human nature to relate. In what a situation do we find the wisest, the most learned, the politest nations of the world, while unenlightened by the gospel? Not only do we find the heavenly luminaries deified by them; but almost every creature on the earth, and under it, worshipped as a god. Not only the fruits of the earth, and the most useful animals; but the ugliest and most noxious creatures; stocks and stones; nay, shameful to tell, imaginary beings have had divine honours paid to them. To such an astonishing degree have imaginary, nominal divinities been multiplied, that certain writers have reckoned up, among one people, a people celebrated all over the world for refinement and literature, the Greeks, no less a number than thirty thousand! An ancient writer informs us that in one temple dedicated to Venus, in the city of Corinth, there were no less than a thousand priestesses, who made prostitution a part of their devotions to that unhallowed goddess. It is said, that, in another quarter of the world, on a certain occasion, no less than sixty thousand human victims were sacrificed in one temple, in the space of four days.

Such is the state of the unenlightened world. In such a state of things is there no need of revelation? Is there no need of the gospel to call and convert men from darkness to light; from the power of satan to God? What say the inspired writers on this subject? A prophet of the Old Testament assures us, that *where there is no vision, the people perish*. An apostle of the New Testament, in the most express manner, affirms,



that the only *name under heaven and among men*, in which there is *salvation* for guilty man, is that of *Jesus Christ*? —What faith the Son of God himself on this subject? He perfectly coincides with his prophets and his apostles. In his solemn address to his heavenly father, on a very memorable occasion, he speaks thus, *this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent*. How necessary, then, and how inestimably precious the gospel! By it we obtain the saving knowledge of the one true God, and of the one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. On whom is *the Lord Jesus to be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, to take vengeance*? Let an apostle say—*On them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*. II. Thes. i. 7. 8. It has been said, if revelation be so necessary and valuable a blessing, why is it not granted to all mankind? Why is it bestowed only on a part, the less part, and withheld from the greater? I, in my turn, ask, Is human comprehension, which ever is imperfect, often erroneous, a proper standard to adjust the distribution of divine favours? Is man wiser than *Him* who made man? Why did he make one of his numerous creatures a grain of sand; another a glorious seraph? Is one man, who is rich, dissatisfied with his lot, because his neighbour is poor? Is the learned man discontented, because many around him are illiterate?

It is asked, if revelation be of such a salutary nature and tendency, why does it not produce, on all who receive it, effects corresponding to its genius and design? This objection originates in inattention to the important distinction between natural and moral causes. The former, by a kind of necessity, produce their proper effects. Thus water extinguishes fire; fire burns combustible matter. Causes or means of the latter kind do not by any such natural necessity or intrinsic efficacy produce their effects. That the gospel, in its constitution and design, is admirably calculated to ac-

comply with the salutary purposes for which it was granted to the world, is admitted even by its most violent opposers. But that it only is a mean, to which he alone, who appointed it, can add irresistible efficacy and saving success, the scripture invariably affirms; and the testimony of scripture, the experience of every age corroborates. The divine spirit is the agent, the gospel the grand mean he employs, in the salvation of sinful man. It is urged, if the word cannot accomplish the salvation of the soul, without the concurring energy of the spirit; why is not the spirit communicated to every man, to whom the gospel is preached? I reply, who is the man, that has asked the spirit, and has not received him? He, whose words are all more permanent than heaven or earth, has expressly said, *your heavenly father will give the holy spirit to them that ask him.*

It is queried, in fine, Can we be certain we now have in possession those, and all those books uncorrupted and unaltered, in which revelation was originally recorded? It may suffice to say, no nation on earth can be more certain of their public records, preserved, with the utmost care, in their archives, than we are of the scriptures now in our hands. The Jews preserved the law of Moses, as the law of their kingdom, in the most sacred part of the tabernacle that was erected in the wilderness, and of the temple which was afterwards built at Jerusalem. The law of Moses, the psalms, and the prophets were read, publicly, in their synagogues, every sabbath-day. With such surprising exactness and scrupulosity did their learned men inspect and guard the sacred text, lest it should, in any instance, be corrupted or altered, that they counted the very number of the letters of each book. Never was another book watched or kept with such punctuality and exactness. Never was there, never will there be, another book written, of equal necessity, importance, or utility.—Many corruptions and abuses did our Lord, in the days of his personal ministry, correct among the Jews. But does he, do his apostles, give the smallest intimation



that any of the sacred books were lost or corrupted among them? No, not the smallest hint. From our Lord's ascension to the period in which we live, the scriptures, of both the Old Testament and the New, have been universally read in all parts of the Christian world. To alter these scriptures, or any part of them, no church, popish or protestant, has ever attempted. Numerous ancient manuscripts are still extant. Numberless translations, especially of the New Testament, have been made, in both earlier and later times. Various readings in the Greek New Testament, indeed, occur. These have been, with great diligence and labour, collected. By whom, for what purpose, has the collection been made; by the enemies of revelation, to invalidate its authority? No, but by its friends to ascertain and strengthen its authority. Of all those numerous, various readings, not one has the smallest tendency to overthrow a single article of Christian faith. They relate to accents, letters and such small matters. Comparing a number of copies we are enabled fully to establish the genuine reading of the sacred text.

The inspired writings I need not enumerate. The books of the Old Testament, beginning with Genesis and ending with Malachi, are universally received as canonical, both among Jews and Christians. The books of the New Testament, beginning with Matthew and ending with the Revelation, are no less universally allowed to be canonical, by Christians of all denominations, popish and protestant.

With regard to the holy scriptures there are, especially, two extremes, into each of which, numbers have gone. Many pretend that they are altogether unnecessary. Others pretend, that not only the scriptures, which we have admitted into the sacred canon, but additional regulations, are necessary, to direct us how we may accomplish the important purposes for which we were sent into the world. In this instance, Jews and Christians, however widely they differ in other things, agree. Professing themselves to be, in effect,

wiser than God, they discover their own extreme folly. Often has satan transformed himself into an angel of light.

It is pretended by the Jews, that, in addition to the law which is contained in the five books of Moses, that illustrious prophet received from God, a variety of revelations, which he did not commit to writing; but communicated verbally to Aaron; Aaron, or his sons, to the judges; the judges to the prophets; and the prophets to one another, from generation to generation. According to this hypothesis the Jews had a two-fold law to direct them in matters, both civil and religious; the one contained in the sacred books; the other oral, transmitted from age to age, by tradition. The last, according to them, ascertained the sense of the first. The scriptural law, without the oral, they considered as imperfect, doubtful, and precarious; if not unmeaning.

Exceedingly did those traditions multiply, in the interval between the removal of the prophetic spirit from the Jewish church and the advent of the Messiah. Hence, on his arrival in our world, he found the Jews so wofully degenerated, that their religion consisted almost entirely in the observation of traditionary rites. Of these an enumeration is unnecessary. Not a few of them are nugatory and trifling; some whimsical and ludicrous; others impious and wicked. Those traditions were collected; and this collection, is, in ecclesiastical history and among theological writers, known by the name of the Talmud. This work consists of two parts, called the Mishna, and the Gemara. The former contains the text, or the traditions themselves; the latter commentaries upon them. The Mishna, which comprehends all the regulations, institutions, and laws, which, in addition to the Hebrew scriptures, the Jews reckoned themselves bound to observe, was, we are told, compiled towards the end of the second century. It is said to have been the work of Rabbi Jehuda Hakkadosh; and to have employed him for



no less than forty years. The commentaries and additions, which succeeding Rabbins made, are said to have been collected by Rabbi Jochanan Ben Eliezer, some say in the fifth, others in the sixth, and others in the seventh century. To the Mishna additions were made by the Jewish doctors in Babylon, in the sixth, or according to certain writers, in the seventh century. Accordingly, in the Jewish history we often read of two Talmuds, distinguished by the names of the Talmud of Jerusalem, and the Talmud of Babylon. The last is said to be held in the highest estimation among the Jews.

The Romish church, in apparent imitation of the Jewish, pretends, that in addition to the scriptures of the New Testament, the apostles received from our Lord, a variety of canons relative to the polity of the Christian church, which have been handed down from apostolical times; and are to be transmitted, and, in every succeeding age of the church, observed, to the end of the world. But this is all pretence. Not to insist on the many obvious mistakes to be found in those canons and constitutions called apostolical, it may suffice to say, that, from several circumstances, it is sufficiently manifest, that they were not composed till long after the death of all the apostles. There is every reason to think, that they were not known in the world, till after the establishment of Christianity in the Roman empire, and through the ambition of aspiring churchmen, abusing that encouragement which they had from the secular powers, that hierarchy, unknown to the apostles, was formed, which afterwards arrived at a most exorbitant pitch, and was productive of effects the most baneful to genuine Christianity. They seem to have made their appearance in the fifth, or, at soonest in the fourth century; when, as every one who is, in the least, acquainted with the history of the ancient church, knows, manifold corruptions had crept into it.

As for the books, commonly called *apocrypha*, it is

unnecessary for me to enlarge concerning them. The appellation apocrypha, is of Greek original, and literally signifies *hidden, unknown*. It has been queried, why they are called apocryphal or unknown books. To this it has been said, that the writers of these books, or, at least, some of them, are not known. But this can be no sufficient reason either for denominating them apocryphal, or excluding them from the sacred canon. There are sacred books, whose authority is not doubted, the writers of which are not certainly known. It has been said, that they are called apocryphal, because they are not publicly read. But neither is this reason satisfactory. For though, they be not publicly read among us, they are among others. They may be named apocryphal or unknown books, because they want those characters and marks of divine authority, by which the sacred scriptures are known to be the word of God, and distinguished from all spurious compositions. Accordingly, though those apocryphal books be sometimes, printed along with the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, they are not intermixed either with the former or the latter, but usually placed between the two. Many parts of them must be allowed to be useful; but inspired they are not. They appear to have been totally unknown in the first and best times of Christianity. Neither Jews nor Christians acknowledged the divinity of them till the Romish church did it. Nor did she do it, till she had, in various instances, degenerated from her ancient purity. Even the council of Trent, when it presumed to establish the authority of those books, found some parts of them so romantic and fabulous, impious and false, that it seems to have been ashamed to admit them into the sacred canon. The indications, not merely of human frailty, but human depravity, which those spurious compositions exhibit, are too numerous to be recited on this occasion, and too glaring to escape the observation even of a superficial reader.

In the historical books of the Old Testament we



find mention of a variety of writings, extant in early times, which are now lost. Useful they might be; but inspired they, doubtless, were not. Had they belonged to the sacred canon, they must have been preserved. Of these we know little more than their names. Such were the *book of the wars of the Lord*. Num. xxi. 14. *The book of Jasher*, II. Sam. i. 18. *The book of Nathan the prophet, the prophecy of Abijah the Shilonite, the visions of Iddo the seer*, II. Chron. ix. 29. Unless the writers of those books were writers of some of the canonical books of the Old Testament, how useful soever their writings might, for a time, be, they must have been uninspired men. Heaven and earth may pass away; but an article of revelation cannot be lost.

In several passages of the New Testament there are supposed to be intimations of books in high estimation among the apostles; but which, if ever they existed, have long ago perished. For instance, in I. Cor. v. 9. the apostle bespeaks the Corinthian converts thus, *I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators*. There are, in general, two ways, in which these words have been interpreted. Either the apostolical writer refers to the preceding context, in which he speaks to the above effect; or he intends a former letter, which he had sent to the Christian converts in Corinth; but which, how excellent and useful soever it might be, was not divinely inspired, and, therefore, did not belong to the sacred canon. The apostle Jude, in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses of his epistle, has been understood to allude to a prophetical book written by the venerable patriarch Enoch; of whose birth, exemplary life, and miraculous translation to heaven, the inspired writer of the book of Genesis has given us a concise account. Certain eastern writers inform us, that this illustrious patriarch received from heaven many volumes of occult sciences and wonderful discoveries. But this is all romance. There is, indeed, said to be extant a book ascribed to Enoch; which, it is said, was, for many centuries, buried in oblivion,

and was discovered about two hundred years ago. To every unprejudiced person, however, it must be manifest, that this composition is of a much later date, and lower original. The writer seems, indeed, to have been a person of a fruitful invention; but whether Jew or Christian, is not certainly known. Of a book written by Enoch the apostle has said nothing. The fact, that Enoch prophesied of the last judgment, the apostle was inspired to record, for the information of the church to the end of the world. But whether he related it as a well-known tradition, or as suggested to him by immediate revelation from heaven, it is not necessary for us to know. All such apocryphal books, whatever Jews or Christians may pretend, want that indelible impression of a divine original, which is the peculiar characteristic of the canonical books.

Here it is natural to ask, How comes it to pass, that the books called canonical, are superior to all other writings in the world? For this the text, that is prefixed to this lecture, sufficiently accounts. Two important particulars relative to the canonical scriptures are affirmed by it; their heavenly origin; and the important salutary purposes they are intended and calculated to subserve.

These books, to the exclusion of all other writings in the world, are affirmed to be *given by inspiration of God*. Of inspiration I will not attempt any logical definition, or critical discussion. Far less will I, in this place canvass the different hypotheses and questions concerning it, which have been agitated among critical writers. Suffice it to say, that our best writers consider it, as consisting of three kinds, or, at least, three degrees; which are distinguished by the names of *superintendency*, *elevation*, and *suggestion*. The general nature of these several kinds or degrees of inspiration, seems to be sufficiently intimated by their different names. They manifestly indicate a gradation. Superintendency denotes the lowest, elevation a higher, and suggestion the highest kind or degree of inspi-



ration. The first intimates, that the sacred penmen were under the superintending influence of the Holy Ghost, only so far as was necessary to preserve them from gross errors and mistakes. The second intimates, that the sacred writers were not only preserved from gross errors and mistakes, but were enabled to write with a degree of elevation and dignity, to which, without such supernatural assistance, they never could have attained. The third kind of inspiration, not only enabled the sacred amanuenses, to avoid errors, and write with elevation and dignity; but, in a supernatural manner, communicated to them from heaven what they were to write. The question now is, which of these kinds or degrees of inspiration is intended in the passage that is prefixed to this discourse; in other words, with which of them were the sacred penmen, of the Old and New Testament, favoured? On this, as on almost every other subject, different opinions have been advanced. One insists, that no higher degree of inspiration was needful, or granted to the sacred writers, than that of superintendency. But, might not the Holy Bible, on this hypothesis, contain many less errors, and smaller mistakes? Another holds, that the divine spirit suggested to the sacred writers the sentiment, but left them entirely to their own choice of expression. But, according to this opinion, may not the truths contained in the sacred writings, how important soever, be expressed in terms the most improper? A third opinion, which has been adopted by many writers, both Jewish and Christian, is, that the different sacred penmen, and even the same penmen, on different occasions, were under a different kind or degree of inspiration. For example, the evangelical writers of the New Testament, when they wrote the history of our Lord's life and ministry, had no occasion for any higher kind of inspiration than superintendency; for they only related facts of which they had a previous personal knowledge; but, in writing the prophetic parts of the New Testament, and foretelling

future events, they were under the highest kind of inspiration. A fourth opinion is, that the Holy Bible, in matter and manner, sentiment and expression, was dictated to the sacred penmen by the unerring spirit of God. One thing is certain, what Moses and the succeeding prophets delivered to the Hebrews, and have, by their writings transmitted to us, is, in places innumerable, affirmed to be the *word* of the *Lord*. And expressly does an apostle of the New Testament speak of the *words, which not man's wisdom teacheth; but which the Holy Ghost teacheth*. To the opinion, that the spirit of inspiration suggested to the sacred writers both sentiment and language, matter and manner, it has been objected, that in the canonical books there is a visible diversity of style and manner. The abettors of this opinion admit the fact, but plead, that the spirit of inspiration used, as his amanuenses, men of different birth, education, and accomplishments, both natural and acquired; and the diversity of genius and capacity which he found among them, instead of superseding, he employed in his service.

The divine inspiration of the scriptures is, indeed, a fundamental article in the Christian system. Upon it the whole Christian scheme depends. How essential and necessary to our comfort is it, that we be fully established and confirmed in this fundamental truth? The most violent attacks, has it, even, in our own times, sustained. Attacked it may be; but overthrown it cannot be. The inspiration of the scriptures, even the most conscientious Christians may be tempted to doubt. Various and unknown are the stratagems and machinations, which the adversary of souls uses to overthrow the faith and interrupt the comfort of militant saints. After the attacks which he made on the head of the church, in the days of his humiliation on earth, what may not the members fear? Often and justly has it been said, it is no sin to be tempted; sin lies in yielding to the temptation. Of the numerous characters and marks of the divine original of the scriptures I shall suggest a few.



First, is there not apparent in the scriptures a divine majesty, that belongs to them *alone*, and distinguishes them from all other books in the world? Does not the great God speak, as well as act, in a manner worthy of himself, and that renders him infinitely superior to all other beings? How proper and how emphatical the question, *Hast thou an arm like God? Or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?* Whoever heard the man Christ Jesus speak in the word, the word accompanied by the power of the spirit, and was not constrained to say, *Never man spake like this man?*

Again, is there not a divine purity conspicuous in the scriptures? Do they not discover a purity as well as a majesty worthy of God? What a disparity between them and the most celebrated compositions of pagan antiquity? What glaring indications of human depravity do we find in the latter? Often are vices extolled for virtues! What sensuality and impurities does the alcoran of Mahomet tolerate, I ought rather to have said, encourage!

Moreover, let me remind my readers of the wonderful harmony and agreement of the several parts of the sacred volume. Were the scriptures all written at once? Were they all written by one person? No. By a variety of persons were they written; by persons in very different stations and conditions of life, from the sovereign down to the herdsman; and in very distant ages. Between the writing of the first and the last of the inspired books a period of fifteen hundred years intervened. And yet one uniform design runs through the whole from first to last. An important fact, with which the supposition of imposture is perfectly incompatible. How often do the most celebrated philosophers contradict each other? How often do they contradict themselves? What palpable inconsistencies do we find in the alcoran? The fact is so glaring, that the votaries of Mahomet themselves are constrained to admit it. For it, however, they attempt to account. But in how flimsy a manner? They plead, that, as

Mahomet was for no less than twenty years employed in writing his alcoran, during that period revolutions happened, which obliged the Deity to repeal certain laws, which he had formerly enacted, and to enjoin others in opposition to them. What ! a long period of twenty years ! Could not the Deity, at the commencement of twenty years, foresee every event, the most fortuitous, that would happen before the expiration of them ? Disadvantageous, unjust, injurious, idea of the Deity ! What was a period of twenty years in comparison of a period of one thousand and five hundred years ! Numerous inconsistencies and contradictions, indeed, have the determined enemies of revealed religion pretended to find in the sacred books. But the advocates of revelation have often, to the conviction and satisfaction of the unprejudiced part of mankind, shewn, that all such contradictions and inconsistencies are only pretended, or at most, only apparent, not real. For a satisfactory solution of all these pretended contradictions I might refer my readers to our commentators and other critical writers. For a specimen, however, I shall subjoin the following instances.

The period of the peregrinations of Abraham's family, which ended in their exit from Egypt, is in Gen. xv. 13, said to continue only four hundred years ; but, in Exod. xii. 40, 41, four hundred and thirty. Easily are these two accounts reconciled. It is four hundred, or four hundred and thirty, according as the commencement of it is dated from Abraham's leaving his native country, or from a later period. The account in Exodus may reckon from the time of his coming out of Ur of the Chaldees ; that in Genesis, from the time, or about the time, of the birth of Isaac.

The number of persons, who, along with Jacob, went down to Egypt, is, in Gen, xlv. 26, said to be three-score and six ; in verse 27, three-score and ten ; and in Acts vii. 14, three-score and fifteen. All these different accounts, however, are perfectly consistent. The first, which expressly excludes Jacob's sons' wives,



may also exclude himself, Joseph and his two sons; and then the number of his posterity amounted exactly to sixty-six. The second may include himself, Joseph, and his two sons, and then his family consisted precisely of three score and ten persons. The third account may exclude Joseph and his two sons, reducing the number to sixty-seven, but may include the eight wives, who are not included in the former account; and then the number is exactly three-score and fifteen, as mentioned by the inspired writer of the Acts.

It is said in II. Sam. xxiv. 24, that David bought the threshing-floor and the oxen for sacrifice, from Araunah or Ornan, for fifty shekels of silver; and in I. Chron. xxi. 25, it is affirmed that he paid to Ornan six hundred shekels of gold. But these accounts are not at all inconsistent. The writer of the book of Samuel intends no more than the spot, on which the altar was erected, and the oxen which were sacrificed on it; but the writer of the Chronicles comprehends the whole mountain, or tract of ground, on which the temple was afterwards built, with all its courts and avenues leading to it. On it, when David purchased it, there might be a number of houses, for which as well as for the ground, it behoved him to pay an adequate price. Fifty shekles of silver might be a no less equitable price for the former, than six hundred shekels of gold for the latter.

The inspired writers of the books of second Samuel and first Chronicles, speaking of the duration of the famine, with which David and Israel were threatened, for his vanity in numbering his subjects; the former II. Sam. xxiv. 13, calls it seven years; the latter I. Chron. xxi. 12, only three years. To remove this difficulty certain writers have supposed, that, through the inattention of transcribers, an error has crept into the text in Samuel. What, perhaps, led them to think so, is, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, commonly known by the name of the septuagint, has in the text, in Samuel, *three* instead of *seven*. But, for

a solution of the difficulty, there does not seem to be any necessity for such a supposition. The famine, had it happened, was to last only three years for the numbering of the people. But there had already been a famine of three years, on account of the injustice and cruelty of Saul in slaying the Gibeonites, II. Sam. xxi. 1, and this famine had ceased only the year immediately preceding. This fourth, probably, was the sabbatical year, in which there was neither sowing nor reaping; and, therefore, if three other years of famine had now commenced, there would have been, in all, no less than seven years of famine; agreeably to the account in second Samuel. But it was for the last three of these seven years only, the famine was to be inflicted for the sin of numbering the people; conformably to the account in first Chronicles.

Once more it is said, I. Kings vii. 9, that in the ark, which stood in the holy of holies, there was nothing beside the two tables of stone. But, Heb. ix. 4, the apostle seems to say, that besides the tables of the covenant, there were in it the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded. But, when the apostle speaks thus, *wherein was the golden pot*; the question is, to *what* does he by the expression *wherein* refer; whether *to the ark*, the nearer antecedent, or to *the holiest of all*, the remoter? That the golden pot and Aaron's rod were in the holy of holies, is certain. But even admitting that the expression *wherein* refers to the immediate antecedent, the ark of the covenant, the Greek preposition, which is translated *in*, has an ambiguity in it, and admits of a latitude of interpretation, that renders the apostle's words fully consistent with those of the Old Testament writer.

(To be Continued.) — See P. 119





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## TO THE PUBLIC.

**S**OLICITOUS for the diffusion of useful knowledge in young country, I have, for some time past, employed my moments of reflection in forming the plan of a Periodical Work, the number of which, as a specimen, I now offer to the public. The plan, doubtless, is more comprehensive, and embraces a greater variety of objects than any other of the periodical kind, that has appeared in this, or, perhaps, any other country. Of the extent and usefulness of my undertaking, I entertain the deepest sense. But, severely can I say, it is my fixed determination, that, if Providence prolong my life and health, no attention, on my part, shall be wanting to render the work, in some degree, adequate to the expectations of my friends, and useful to the public.


To all the friends of religion and science it must be a pleasing reflection, that a very great number of religious periodical publications, intermixed with occasional discussions on articles of history, criticism, and philosophy, are now in circulation, and, with an avowed almost incredible, and success surpassing expectation, read by hundreds and tens of thousands, of all denominations of Christians, in Great Britain. Have the citizens of the American states done equal honour to themselves by their successful exertions in the cause of civil liberty ; and shall they resign the palm to their European brethren in any laudable attempt to promote the sacred cause of religion and morality ? Do the inhabitants of these states increase in population and wealth, in agriculture and commerce, to such a degree that attracts the attention of distant nations, and diffuses universal joy among themselves ; and shall they indulge themselves in criminal inattention to the all-important concerns of religion in the world to come ? God forbid !

The periodical mode of publication, though of very late invention, has already proved to be a most useful and successful vehicle of instruction. It is attended with many advantages alike obvious and important. By it we blend amusement with instruction ; we exhibit variety and avoid prolixity. It befits the state and circumstances of millions, who have not either money to purchase, or leisure to read large volumes.

I do not pretend to deep erudition or extensive reading ; to distinguished refinement in sentiment or composition, I do not pretend. Having had the advantage of an early academical education, read a few books, and now arrived at an advanced stage in the great journey of life, my aim is to communicate to my fellow mortals the result of my long and researches ; to bring into their view, within a narrow compass, the origin and progress, the state and circumstances, the institutions and changes, of the church and the world, of religion and learning, during the long period of five thousand and eight hundred years.

compiled, on purpose, for it. The theological part consists of discourses, which, above fifteen years were delivered, in a form somewhat different, to a numerous congregation in Edinburgh, and published in that city, under the title of an *Exposition criminal, and practical, of that celebrated compend of Christian religion, the Assembly's Shorter Catechism*. The miscellaneous department consists partly of pieces composed for it; and partly of articles selected from other authors.

MICHAEL ARTHUR

 A Title Page to the first volume will be printed long with the twelfth number.